

Andrew Jackson to Martin Van Buren, November 14, 1831, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO MARTIN VAN BUREN.1

1 Copy. Handwriting of R. E. W. Earl.

Washington, November 14, 1831.

My Dear Sir, I have the pleasure to acknowledge your several letters, viz: the one at sea, one of the 21st and two of the 28th of September last. Please accept for each and all of them my sincere thanks, and permit me to congratulate you and your son upon the fine health you enjoyed on your passage, and say to Mr. Vail that I regret much to hear of his sufferings. Your two last letters came in good time as we were just preparing a communication to transmit to the Senate with the award, and, it was highly important to be informed of the views of the British Government on that subject, before making this communication to the senate. You cannot, therefore, doubt of having my full approbation of the manner in which you have executed my wishes as expressed to you in my letter of the 10th of August last and I hope the communication promised by the B Minister will reach here before the meeting of congress. The friendly feelings of the Government of England, as expressed by the King and his Ministers, towards this, are highly regarded, and, on a proper occasion, you can assure the Minister that those friendly feelings are duely reciprocated by me. I am truly gratified at the kind reception which you have met with from all, and do not doubt but you will maintain the confidence of that, and advance the interest of our own Government. Your letter at sea affords me some valuable suggestions, which will be beneficially used. Any suggestions which your leisure will permit, and you may choose to make on any subject will be kindly received.

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I think we will manage the business in respect to the award pretty well; but the opposition no doubt for political effect, will throw as many difficulties in our way as possible, and attempt to use it to my prejudice. I have but one doubt as to the propriety of my course on this subject, and that is whether I ought not to have taken the open ground of supporting the award. This doubt is created by the fact that, on this subject, the national faith was pledged by the acts and treaties of my predecessor, and, if Great Britain agrees to carry into effect the award and we refuse to do so, we may be charged with the want of good faith, and, on this ground, Britain might take possession of the soil to the limits of her antient claims, which would lead to war. My advisers think it would be best for me not to avow a positive determination to support the award, as it is believed Congress will advise the award to be carried into effect rather than hazzard the probability of a war, and thereby disturb the good understanding which now happily exists between the two Countries. Nevertheless there appeares something awkward which may be construed as a s[h]rinking, from respons[i]bi[li]ty under existing circumstances, which on reflection I do not like, in laying the subject before the senate as it may return the communication, and say that the matter belongs to the Executive, and when he calls upon us for the necessary aid to carry the award into effect, or for further negotiation on the subject they will answer the call. We have, however, determined to persue the course first agreed upon before you left me.

I have prepared the outlines of my message. We have found that we are able, with the use of the Bank Stock, to pay the public debt by the 3rd of March 1833, and we will recommend to congress the propriety of taking up the Tariff, and making a judicious reduction of duties to meet the wants of the Government after the public debt is paid, and consequently go into operation on 4th March 1833. This will annihilate the Nullifiers as they will be left without any pretext of Complaint. And, if they attempt disunion, it must be because they wish it, and have only indulged in their vituperations against the Tariff for the purpose of covertly accomplishing their ends.

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The appeal of Maj. Eaton has had the most powerful and beneficial effect throughout the Union. Messers Calhoun, Ingham, Branch and Berrien are compleately prostrated. I send you a Nashville paper that will give you some idea of the reaction in that place.² Judge Overton

² A letter from J. C. McLemore to A. J. Donelson, Nov. 9, 1831 (Library of Congress, A. J. Donelson Papers), has the following account of the visits of Eaton and his wife and Branch to Nashville:

“Your kind favour of the 15th ulto. was recvd. a day or two before the arival of Govenor Branch who reached here on the day of the dining given to Eaton. You will have seen by the papers the kind reception given to Eaton. I was a subscriber to the dinner given him and attended it, there was fifty five of the sixty members of the Legislature and about 130 of our citizens, all thorough goeing Jackson men subscribers, and all attended. Eaton made a verry appropriate and excellent speech, the toasts were not personal and generally good and everything went off well—a good many ladies called on Mrs. E. A large party was given at Mr. Biddles at which she and all the fashionables of our little Town attended—Me and my wife with the rest—no introductions past—my wifes curiosity was satisfied by a sight of Mrs. E. She did not call on Mrs. E. although Bell urged it on me as being proper. I cou'd not see it in that light and of course my wife did not call on Mrs. E. She is however disposed to do whatever may be thought advisable by you and her sister, as she will not do any thing that might be supposed to prejudice her *sister*. I called on Eaton the day after his arival at the city Hotel. he recvd. me verry kindly and I was introduced to Mrs. E. but no conversation passed between her and me—the Majr. treated me with marked politeness. I gave every encouragement to others to take their wives to Visit Mrs. E, believing as I do *now* the sooner she gets full into society the better. I go in for the support of the old chief and so far as the reception of Eaton may be considered as a support of the Genl. he has been thus far well supported here. In Franklin, Murfreesboro [and] other places it is said dinners will be given Eaton.

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"Govenor Branch too has been verry kindly recvd. by the Genls. friends. I called on him at Mr Hills the day after his arival and indeed every day since he has been here. Your Brother Daniel and wife has been with him all the time. my wife called on them and we invited them to spend an evening with us, but their engagements heretofore has prevented them. We invited them to spend tomorrow evening, but they are engaged to spend it with Mr. Hill and the next day will set out for Sumner, and on Monday Govenor Branch will set out for Washington, he with Daniel and wife has however promised to spend a half an hour at my house tomorrow. I have had much conversation with Govenor Branch and so has Bell, on the subject of his situation and relation to the Genl, and I am pleased to say to you that the more I know of the man the more I admire and love him; there never was a better or more honest man than John Branch—he is not a great man, but an *honest man*, for had he been great, he wou'd never have come out in support of Ingham and Berrien in the way and at the time he did—in that he committed a great blunder and how he is to get out of it is difficult to immagine. Yet I hope there is a way; and so far as may be in my power I am ready and willing to help so as not to injure the Genl—not otherwise. Bell and myself have had much conversation on the subject and we both went as far as we cou'd with safety, to render Branch's stay here as suthing to his feelings as possible. Bell went with him to the Legislature while in session and he was invited and took a seat within the Bar. A private dining was given the Govenor at Mr. J. Nichols and several large private dinnings was given him at Franklin, (as I am informed by Mr. Hill) from which place the Govenor has just retur'd. He spent an evening at Mr. Berryhills and upon the whole he has spent his time quite agreeably. The only occurrence I regret is his dinning at Dr. M[c]nairy's. I wish he cou'd have gotten over it; but I am told that the Doctor was so pressing he cou'd not well get over it. I am glad Daniel and wife did not attend. The Doctor give him a verry large dinning as I am told, upwards of eighty attended. Bell and a great number of thorough going Jackson men were at the Dinner, maney of the same who were at Eaton's Dinner. Bell was at Eatons dinner also. Bell done every thing he cou'd to render Branches situation

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as agreeable as possible—he is a noble fellow. Jackson and Branch never had a better friend than he is.”

writes me that there was but one lady, Mrs. Doctor McNary, in Nashville who did not wait upon Mrs. Eaton, and I am further informed that fifty four members of the Legisla[t]ure (out of 69 the whole number, one being dead) attended the dinner, and that in the evening Eaton and his wife were invited to attend the Theatre which was crowded by an audience the most fashionable and respectable. But poor Branch, the worst of the matter for him is not yet told. He reached Nashville the evening of the dinner, and, on the next day, went to the Assembly room, where Mr. Bell and Maj. Eaton were by invitation, and, after remaining in the *lobby* for some time without any attention being paid to him, he retired. He doubtless exclaims in his anguish “Farewell, a long Farewell to all my greatness”, as he now discovers his sad mistake in supposing that he, Ingham, Berrien, Calhoun, Duff Green and Co could raise up and crush whom they wished at pleasure, and destroy me by prostrating Eaton and yourself. These men have “fallen unwept, unhonoured, and unsung”, except by a few of their satalites, and, like Lucifer, to rise no more. Their project now is to impeach me, and reject yourself, McLane and Livingston in the Senate. This is only to alarm. I fear them not, nor need you. You are gaining strength in the nation, and will continue to rise in public estimation. Your enemies might as well attempt to change the running of the water in the Mississippi as to prevent your obtaining the increased confidence of the people. To shew you the baseness and further duplicity of Calhoun I enclose you the Globe. Read Speers letter.³ What *must* a moral community think of a man so perversely prone to secret lying as J. C. Calhoun is proven to be? My best respects with that of my son major Donelson

³ Alexander Speer, of South Carolina, an agent to collect a claim of the state from the federal government. His letter was published in the newspapers and is in *Niles' Register*, XLI. 141.

his Lady and miss Easton, with Major Lewis and Mr Earle to you, are affectionately presented to you, your son and mr. Vail, with my prayers for your prosperity. My son on

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the 24th instant will be a married man, unless a slip between the cup and lip. he marries the accomplished and said to be beautiful miss York of Philadelphia. your friend